

Dr Janssen quotes largely from this source to show what a savage, unholy, God-forsaken crusade this Boer rising was. Now, the smashing and hacking of images and relics, the burning of massbooks, schoolmen and fathers, the spilling of sacramental wine, might savour of blasphemy in the eyes of those who still believed in transubstantiation. But it must not be forgotten that these things were regarded by most of the peasants as emblems of Antichrist. The robbery of church treasure, the seizure of cartloads of ecclesiastical property, the quaffing of huge bumpers of first-rate wine at many an unlucky ecclesiastic's expense, make an ugly spectacle. But if these facts prove the depravity or the greed of the insurgents, they plainly prove their utter contempt for a Church which had sadly neglected the moral education of the people, while tempting its covetousness by its overgrown wealth, often unrighteously acquired and shamelessly misapplied. Hatred of the traditional Church and its worthless ministers is, in fact, one of the most remarkable features of the movement. This hatred and its consequences are not to be explained by denunciations of sacrilege. There was more than mere greed of plunder in the wholesale destruction of the religious establishments which had made themselves hateful to a whole people by their abuses.

Apart from these outrages, of which the horrified chroniclers, who cannot understand why the world will not at times keep in its conventional course, make so much, it cannot be said that the peasant as a rule showed any savage desire to shed the blood of his enemies. All things considered, there are remarkably few excesses of murderous passion to record. In this respect the German insurrection of 1525 contrasts favourably with the French Jacquerie of 1358, or the English rising of 1381. The Weinsberg tragedy was exceptional. The butchery of Count Helfenstein and eighteen knights in the presence of the countess, a natural daughter of the Emperor Maximilian, was the work of the cut-throat Jacklein Rohrbach, and was perpetrated against the orders of Rohrbach's superior, George Metzler. It was a ruffianly deed, but its perpetrators had been exasperated by the slaughter of one of the peasant bands under the walls of Weinsberg. As a rule, the peasants were content to make the lords who fell into their hands swear the